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ABSTRACT

A review of more than 100 articles and papers in interpersonal and small group communication (ISG) research done in 1977 and a survey of active researchers revealed that it was difficult to identify significant trends in content and methodology as well as to note specific advances and problems reflected in the research. However, six issues or themes emanating from 1977 ISG research are: researchers are increasingly concerned about the lack of adequate theoretical foundations for ISG research, many researchers are concerned about the tendency to exceed the conceptual boundaries of human communication, many researchers are disappointed by the quality of questions that are addressed, many ISG researchers remain concerned by the prevalence of the "law of the hammer" (the tendency of social scientists to inflict an available methodology on phenomena regardless of the appropriateness of that methodology), ISG researchers recognize the lack of adequate focus and clear conceptualization reflected in recent research, and ISG researchers appear eager for and in need of extended and thoughtful exchanges among themselves. (A bibliography of 1977 ISG articles and the questionnaire used in the survey are appended.) (TJ)

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# INTERPERSONAL AND SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION RESEARCH IN 1977: REVIEW AND COMMENTARY

Julia T. Wood

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# INTERPERSONAL AND SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION RESEARCH IN 1977: REVIEW AND COMMENTARY

Julia T. Wood

My original goals for this paper were to identify significant trends in content and methodology as well as to note advances and problems reflected in the interpersonal and small group communication (ISG) research published in 1977. After reviewing over one hundred articles and papers, however, it became clear to me that these goals were unobtainable. I cannot define for you today the topics which received most attention in the ISG research of 1977 because coverage was characterized by considerably more breadth than depth. In 1977 we studied everything from interpersonal trust to androgyny, from leadership styles to groupthink. My initial effort to conduct a thematic review resulted in an unwieldy catalogue rather than in a useful classification. Furthermore, I cannot identify for you the theoretical underpinnings of the ISG research published in 1977 since there is major controversy regarding the appropriateness and value of various theoretical approaches to ISG research. Nor can I report to you the predominant methodological character of ISG research since the past year's publications reflected a broadening rather than a narrowing of methodologies and designs. In 1977 we employed all types of data analysis ranging from ANOVAs and multiple regression analyses to analyses of discourse and Markov chains, every research setting from the conventional laboratory to the field, every type of subject ranging from the always-available college sophomore to practising leaders. There were few trends reflected in the topics, methodologies and theoretical postures of ISG research reported in 1977.

Despite my inability to meet my original goals of classifying neatly the past year's research and despite the lack of clear trends in the ISG research of 1977, this will not be a pessimistic evaluation claiming that ISG researchers are without direction. Nor will I argue that common threads were

absent in the research reported in 1977. Quite the contrary: There were very strong and consistent themes, themes more fundamental, in fact, than those pertinent to particular topics or methodologies. There were marked patterns in the research; it was simply, as Bateson might have suggested, a different order of level of patterning than I had originally anticipated. I had begun my review as an historian, asking what order inhered in the past year's research, but I became a "seer," predicting what the research of 1977 portended for the future. I had begun my review by analyzing the content of research to determine what it contained, what answers it provided, but I wound up focusing on matters beneath that content to discern issues confronting ISG researchers.

To reflect accurately the past year's research, then, this report must be more of a prognosis than a diagnosis of the state of ISG research. In 1977 the reported research reflected an overarching concern with building adequate foundations for the future. Toward this end researchers sought to pose critical questions, rather than to answer them; we sought to identify significant issues, rather than to resolve them; we sought to locate and explicate alternatives, rather than to designate directions. 1977 was a year characterized by reflection, assessment and exploration, and the tone of our research was more tentative than declarative. In this report I will highlight six issues or themes which emanated from the ISG research reported during the past year. In addition to reflecting the research of 1977, these six themes suggest some of the more critical directions for future ISG research.[1]

## THEMES IN THE ISG RESEARCH OF 1977

### 1. Researchers are increasingly concerned about the lack of adequate theoretical foundations for ISG research.

There appears to be little controversy regarding the current inadequacy of theoretical foundations for ISG research. The once-popular deterministic paradigm now appears inappropriate for the dynamic, processual phenomena we wish to study.

Our attempts to generate a substitute to the deterministic paradigm have often been limited to superficial revisions of theories in vogue in related disciplines, but these efforts have not yielded viable theoretical baselines for our specific concerns with human communication. While most ISG researchers agree that the current deficiencies in our theory (or lack thereof) constitute a substantial problem, we seem less equivocal in our views of solutions.

During the past year a number of scholars vigorously advocated particular theories for ISG research. Among the candidates for adoption were symbolic interactionism (Littlejohn, 1977), constructivism (Delia, 1977a), covering laws (Berger, 1977b), systems (Monge, 1977), rules (Cushman, 1977) and developmental (Miller, 1978 ), the latter three receiving most concentrated attention. While discussions of theoretical postures have tended to focus on interpersonal communication research, they are clearly applicable to small group communication research as well. The number of articles addressing theoretical and metatheoretical issues reflects many scholars' dedication to defining specific theoretical foundations for future research.

Other scholars, however, have strongly criticized such a priori attempts to define or designate a theoretical posture for research. Several researchers (notably Hawes, 1977a; Bochner, 1978) have argued that concern with theoretical issues is premature and that more thorough observation and description of communication phenomena are prerequisites to any theoretical accounting. Without considerably more data, they claim, we have no grounds for assessing the value of alternative theories as means of describing, explaining and predicting communication.

In what might be considered a compromise between these two positions Delia has suggested that the discipline needs "well articulated, fruitful, substantive theoretical stances to which individual researchers are committed. . ." (1977b, p.61). The majority of respondents to my questionnaire echoed Delia's stance by recognizing the dual needs for clarification of

alternative theories and less rigid, parochial insistence on particular theories. Clearly good theory building is an extended process which cannot be dictated by whims nor achieved by arguments in lieu of data. Theoretical patronage cannot and should not be legislated since this would cause theory to become dogma which would unnaturally restrict our research instead of informing and enriching it.

During 1977 ISG researchers seriously addressed the basic problem of inadequate theoretical foundations for research, and we began the critical process of self-examination that should precede any endorsement of a posture or postures. While we may not be of one mind regarding how to develop adequate theoretical foundations, there does appear to be consensus that we have reached the point at which it is appropriate to begin discussing and evaluating a variety of theories. The publications of 1977 have presented very useful initial descriptions and assessments of a range of potentially viable theoretical approaches to interpersonal and small group communication. Future research will very probably continue this theoretical dialogue which dominated the publications of 1977.

2. Many researchers are concerned about the tendency to exceed the conceptual boundaries of human communication.

Much of the ISG research reported in 1977 might have been conducted by social scientists in a variety of disciplines other than Speech Communication. Psychological, sociological, anthropological, and social-psychological phenomena seem too frequently investigated for their own sakes rather than for their potential utility in advancing understandings of communicative phenomena and processes.

Respondents to my questionnaire unanimously stated that among ISG researchers there is not agreement on the conceptual boundaries of the field, and all but one respondent agreed ISG researchers are not adequately integrating their research into underlying frameworks of human communication processes. As

one respondent phrased it, "I do not think we should get hung up about disciplinary boundaries or territories. However, we should be able to establish that our research focuses on communication behavior in contrast to behavior in general." This comment reflects a concern of most respondents, the majority of whom listed the single most pressing deficiency of ISG research as a failure to focus on communication behaviors.

While disciplinary focus is surely not a new problem for members of this association, it remains one of significance. A decade ago the New Orleans conferees recognized the interdisciplinary nature of Speech Communication and noted that we "must draw conspicuously on disciplines outside the field itself" (1969, p. 6), but surely this was not meant to encourage scholars of Speech Communication to engage in investigations of primarily sociological, psychological or social-psychological character. Surely the conferees were not inviting us to relegate human communication to a subsidiary status while the central focus of research extended into other areas. I find this perennial problem of disciplinary focus especially perplexing since it appears that there is a great deal of work, important work, which badly needs doing if we are to understand the nature, functions and consequences of communication between people, and work of this sort is what we are best equipped to address. Despite this, my respondents suggested we are not yet concentrating on research which maintains a clear, consistent focus on human communication.

The tendency of ISG researchers to conduct studies all around human communication was countered in 1977 by Litton-Hawes' introduction of a new research focus which directly investigates talk. In premiering the investigation of "everyday talk" Litton-Hawes noted, "although talk is traditionally treated as a resource--data which reflects or points to social psychological variables--talk is also a phenomenon in its own right. . ." (1977, p. 2). In discussing conversational analysis, a close relative of everyday talk, Nofsinger announced that "communication is worth studying itself rather than as an indicator of something else" (1977, p. 12). While the emerging interest in

everyday talk has not yet demonstrated its substantive value, it is nonetheless useful in reminding us that communication in and of itself is a phenomenon that merits our attention.

Whether we choose to study communication per se or the ways in which communication affects and is affected by other phenomena, human communication should be a central concern. What researchers in this division have not yet done in an adequately rigorous or committed fashion is to define justifiable boundaries for their research. This is a continuing problem which has impact upon our identity as a discipline and upon our ability to focus usefully our research. The research reported in 1977 and the concerns expressed by my respondents suggest that more limited conceptual boundaries for research are needed if we are to get on with the business of advancing substantive understandings of communication between persons.

3. Many researchers are disappointed by the quality of questions that are addressed.

This is an extremely knotty issue since it presupposes some understanding of or criteria for "quality" or "meaningfulness" of research questions. Despite this and despite my own reluctance to define those terms, among ISG researchers there appears to be considerable doubt as to the value of many questions (and potential answers to them) currently being addressed. The most stinging criticism of the content of recent ISG research has come from Bochner (1978, p. 165): "We are able to make very few nontrivial generalizations about everyday, ordinary interactions between people. We have developed few formally stated theories to guide interpersonal research. And much of the research published in our journals still seems to border on the inane and incompetent." While respondents to the questionnaire were not as extreme as Bochner in their indictments of the substantive quality of recent ISG research, most of them did express significant concern over the trivial nature of many published reports.

A second concern related to the quality of research topics was expressed by many of my respondents. They suggested that substantively valuable inquiries were oftentimes compromised for popularized subject matter. While several specific topics were mentioned as illustrations of this problem, androgyny received a clear plurality of votes as the outstanding example of "fad research". Respondents cautioned against the temptation to jump on the bandwagon of in vogue subject matter.

Several respondents suggested primary obstacles to the pursuit of "meaningful" inquiries. The most frequently cited obstacle was the increasing pressure to publish and to publish frequently. Lack of forums for lengthy monographs and the time required for non-laboratory, non-experimental research were seen as factors contributing to the piecemeal nature of much of the research reported in 1977. Several respondents also intimated that the criteria employed by journal editors may be insufficient to stimulate genuinely useful research. Another noted cause of mediocre research was the lack of focus inherent in the work of individual researchers. This last problem was well exemplified by one respondent's statement: "I don't have any central questions for my research. I am a methodologist." This also foreshadows a fourth theme in the research of 1977.

4. Many ISG researchers remain concerned by the prevalence of the "law of the hammer".

In his review of interpersonal communication theory and research Hewes (1978, p. 155) recalled Lewin's discussion of "the law of the hammer," which is "the tendency of social scientists to inflict an available methodology on phenomena regardless of the appropriateness of that methodology." Hewes argued that methodological conventionality and convenience too often dictate theoretical moves and conceptual directions in ISG research. Additional recognition of this problem may be found in critiques by Berger (1977a), Berlo (1977), Budd (1977), and Cappella (1977). Respondents to the questionnaire also

expressed considerable concern over the perceived frequency with which methodological considerations preempted conceptual issues. Nearly half of the respondents suggested that the tendency among ISG researchers is to take stock of methodological and procedural competencies and THEN ask what questions might thereby be approached.

The laboratory setting and an array of powerful statistical procedures are staples in our methodology closets, but our familiarity with these methods should not encourage us to apply them automatically to all questions or, just as undesirable, to pose only questions to which we can apply these methods. Niether should we be uncritically captivated by novel methods which are inappropriate for many research queries. Methodological decisions must always flow from conceptual concerns.

The recurrent issue of methodological appropriateness will assume renewed importance now that ISG researchers are interested in investigating the developmental nature of interpersonal and small group communication processes. All of our methodological competencies will be challenged, and increased methodological creativity and flexibility will be required of us. As we attempt to examine communication that occurs over time in relationships we will need more ingenuity than has been required in the past and we will need to devote substantially more time to the collection and interpretation of data than has generally been necessitated in our research. Fortunately we do have examples of this kind of research and of the quality of understandings it can produce. Bormann (1972, 1975), for instance, has used fantasy theme analysis to demonstrate how language is employed to create and sustain social realities within small groups. His program of research has provided substantive insights into the power of language in defining situations. In the interpersonal area, Bochner (1978, p. 183) reports that he has begun examining metaphors as reflections of relational themes. He acknowledges the "admittedly soft" character of his methodology, but argues this is a temporary necessity, given his conceptual concerns. I single

out these research programs because they illustrate the possibility of designing methodological approaches in harmony with conceptual interests. Both Bormann and Bochner seem to have focused their initial attention on the questions they wanted to answer and then addressed methodological considerations.

The point is not whether laboratories are or are not appropriate environments for research, whether conversational analysis is or is not a useful tool, whether students are or are not adequate subjects. Rather, the point is that none of these issues should even be addressed prior to determining and defining carefully questions that merit research. Methodological sophistication will never be an adequate substitute for conceptual clarity, and it will never improve upon trivial questions. Preoccupation with methodological rather than conceptual considerations actively discourages the pursuit of substantive inquiry and the accumulation of knowledge worth having. In highlighting the implications of the New Orleans conference Carroll Arnold made this point in his characteristically direct manner (1969, p. 189): "The kinds of questions asked in research are in the last analysis more important to our future than the procedures by which answers are sought." Despite the many times we have been admonished to make methods subservient to substance, perhaps we can still benefit from the respondents and the critics who assessed the research of 1977 and who pronounced the "law of the hammer" to be alive and well.

5. ISG researchers recognize the lack of adequate focus and clear conceptualization reflected in recent research.

When asked whether ISG researchers had adequate agreement on their basic objects of research ('interpersonal communication' and 'small group communication'), with only one exception respondents to the questionnaire said, "No."

In interpersonal communication research we seem to be moving toward consensus that relationships, not individuals, are the appropriate units of study. This general agreement,

however, is not buttressed by concurrence on additional fundamental concepts such as situations, messages, or--most basically--interpersonal communication which is variously defined by situational conditions, linguistic etimology and intrapersonal cognitions. Such diversity in definitions of major concepts and the necessarily encumbent range of investigatory foci have obviously discouraging implications for integration or systhesis of findings, muchless development of any coherent theoretical posture.

But what of research in small group communication, an area with longer history? There appears to be better agreement on the priorities for research which may be due to Gouran's (1973) call for a focus on outcomes, communication affecting outcomes and mediating contextual variables. With few exceptions the small group research addresses a group of central topics including leadership, consensus, participation and member satisfaction. Although small group researchers appear to have general agreement on the appropriate topics for study, they do not yet have clear agreement on the nature of the phenomena they investigate. This problem can be illustrated by reviewing briefly several studies of leadership, the subject of a majority of small group communication publications appearing in 1977. In one experiment (Gouran and Geonetta, 1977) fifteen students groups were employed to investigate the effects of centralized versus decentralized leadership structures. In a second study (Baird, 1977) twenty minute samples of student group discussions were analyzed to identify nonverbal elements of leadership emergence. In a third report (Downs and Pickett, 1977) contingency analyses of three leadership styles and three compatibility groupings were conducted. In a fourth study (Wood, 1977) designated leaders of ongoing administrative committees were the subjects of an examination of how leaders adapted communication to situational goals and constraints. In reading over these four studies of leadership I am confronted by a series of questions about the conceptual nature of what was being studied, i.e.,

leadership. A few sample questions should illustrate my point: Is leadership of a short-term laboratory group even roughly equivalent to that of a long-term 'real life' committee? Is designated leadership different from elected leadership or emergent leadership? Is leadership of committees within organizations in any way different from leadership in isolated settings? What is the relationship or overlap between the three leadership styles studied by Downs and Pickett and the two leadership styles studied by Gouran and Geonetta? What relationship between the categories employed in Wood's content analysis and those used by Gouran and Geonetta? These are important questions because they have bearing upon concerns shared by all serious researchers: How do we effectively share and synthesize knowledge? How do we profit from each other's discoveries? How do we become a "community of scholars"? We cannot answer these questions satisfactorily as long as substantial conceptual differences are obscured by our use of similar or same generic terms (leader, leadership) for an apparent range of phenomena and processes. It may, therefore, be advisable for us to either employ different terms to designate essentially different phenomena or to modify terms much more clearly lest we all become victims of the Humpty-Dumpty syndrome: When I use a word it means just ( and only!) what I choose it to mean--niether more nor less!

Reaching even general agreements on appropriate foci and conceptualizations for research will be a most difficult task, but it is one that is essential if we are to produce anything of substance and if we are to generate findings that can be tied clearly to other research in our area.

6. ISG researchers appear eager for and in need of extended and thoughtful exchanges among themselves.

Perhaps the most discouraging trend I discerned in the research published in 1977 and in the responses to the questionnaire was a hardening sense of "camps" or factions within the ISG division. One indication of this was in my respondents'

assessments of the quality of questions being asked by ISG researchers. Those respondents who identified themselves as endorsing a systems perspective were impressed by research emanating from a systems approach and were unimpressed by research from other approaches. Those respondents who embraced a developmental conception of interpersonal communication saw substantial value in research which reflected a developmental focus but denigrated research which did not. There would appear to be parochial and circular qualities to the reasoning implicit in such evaluations.

Not all of the respondents, however, had absolute views of the appropriate theoretical posture. In fact, the majority of respondents stated they were concerned by the development of fairly clear and cohesive subgroups which they saw as having potentially destructive implications for our division. Respondents criticized the tendency of individuals to "become inflexibly tied to their own conceptual frameworks and instruments" or "to diminish the value of research which does not follow personal preferences for theory and design." As one respondent rather jocularly claimed, the problem is that researchers tend to believe that "their conceptual framework is the immaculate perception." If such divisiveness is more than an hallucination of my respondents (and I suspect it is), we should deal with the problem. Factionalization among ourselves can only handicap us as individuals by restricting our perspectives and can only cripple the division by rendering unlikely the development of central goals and mutual respect.

One means of countering possible factionalization is open, thoughtful exchanges among ourselves. If my respondents are at all typical of ISG members in general, we are eager for this kind of exchange. All but one of my respondents said that a developmental conference in ISG would be useful, although a few respondents did add the caveat that any such conference should be clearly defined as a forum for discussion rather than advocacy. Recognition of our interdependence and the values that emanate from it will require us to approach each

other as colleagues, rather than as competitors and it will require us to view our differences as a means of stimulation rather than as a challenge to battle. I think we can approach each other this way and, by so doing, reap considerable benefits as individuals and as a division.

The groundwork for such exchanges has already been laid. This panel and the SCA-sponsored seminars at this convention represent efforts to provide forums in which researchers may come together in a spirit of inquiry and in which they may learn to understand and appreciate each other's viewpoints. We will not necessarily arrive at agreements in all of the areas suggested by this paper, nor am I at all sure that such agreements should be a priority since diversity, when controlled and understood, can have substantial value. Forums for open discussion, however, can provide us with sufficient understandings of each other's research to identify common interests and to distinguish substantive differences from ones that are primarily terminological. Forums for discussion can also assist our efforts to build upon each other's work so that we can begin synthesizing our knowledge. Only by participating in such discussions can we begin to clarify our differences in productive ways. Only by participating in such discussions can we integrate the diversity of findings that have grown out of our first ten years. And only by participating in such discussions can we begin addressing the very important task of setting priorities and establishing directions for future research which can meet our ultimate, common goal of developing fruitful, substantive theories of interpersonal and small group communication. Such discussions among ourselves are a necessary response to the more than a dozen critical assessments of ISG theory and research that have appeared in the past two years.

## SUMMARY

In this report I have highlighted six issues or themes reflected in the ISG research of 1977: lack of adequate theoretical foundations, extension beyond the conceptual boundaries

of human communication, triviality of research questions, methodological preoccupation, lack of focus and clear conceptualization, and the need for thoughtful exchanges. These six issues may be conceived as the etiology and symptoms of disciplinary carcinoma which I define as a particularly insidious malignancy resulting in uncontrolled, unpredictable and undesirable growth of research that is prone to invade and infect normal, healthy areas of a discipline and render them sufficiently unfocused that they have little value in advancing theory. If ISG researchers continue to explore without direction and continue to produce without synthesis, there is the very real possibility that we will develop a terminal case of disciplinary carcinoma. The alternative is to find means of controlling the directions of our research.

As a relatively young division, about a decade old as an officially recognized identity, ISG has undergone the birth pangs typical of any new interest group. Our first ten years of enthusiasm have given us a sense of directions open to us, but not a clear perception of which ones are most worthy of concentrated pursuit; the first ten years have provided affirmation of the continuing, substantive value of accumulating knowledge about interpersonal and small group communication, but a less than satisfactory view of how such knowledge might best be sought; the first ten years have produced many answers, but I fear these were not always guided by substantive questions. We have reached the juncture at which it is appropriate, if not critical, to define ourselves and our interests. This need for definition and direction characterized the past year's research.

Should this report be viewed as an indictment of the ISG research reported in 1977? I think not. True, I have called attention to what appear to be serious issues confronting us, but such issues arise only when researchers are active, interested and productive as we have been. The concerns that I have highlighted in this report suggest not failures, but

challenges to be met if our future research is to be of the quality we all desire. The prognosis for meeting these challenges is good. The forum at this convention seems indicative of the decision to pursue serious discussions among ourselves and to address the kinds of issues raised in this report and similar ones preceding it. If the reflection and assessment characteristic of the 1977 research continues as I believe it will, future scholarship will become more focused and more fruitful.

## Endnote

[1]While many ISG researchers frequently publish in journals external to our discipline and while studies pertinent to interpersonal and small group communication are published in forums outside of SCA and ICA, it was not feasible for me to review all possibly relevant publications. This report is based on information from four broad sources: (1) Articles published in the 1977 volumes of eleven journals: Communication Education, Communication Monographs, Communication Quarterly, Communication Research, Central States Speech Journal, Human Communication Research, Journal of Applied Communication, Journal of Communication, Quarterly Journal of Speech, Southern Speech Communication Journal, and Western Speech Communication Journal. (2) A survey of Books In Print including entries listed under the following titles: "Speech," "Communication," "Interpersonal Communication," "Interpersonal Behavior," "Speech Communication," "Discussion," "Small Group," and "Small Group Communication." (3) Recently published reviews or surveys of ISG research: Berger (1977a; 1977b), Bochner (1977; 1978), Bormann (1970); Bradac (1977), Budd (1977), Cappella (1977), Cushman (1977), Delia (1977a; 1977b), Gouran (1973), Hawes (1977a; 1977b), Hewes (1978), Littlejohn (1977), Miller (1978), Monge (1977), Pearce (1977), Rossiter (1977) and Weimer (1978). (4) Responses to a questionnaire mailed to a group of ISG researchers: Dean Barnlund, David Berg, Art Bochner, Ernest Bormann, John Brilhart, John F. Cragan, Jesse G. Delia, Philip Emmert, B. Aubrey Fisher, A. Goldberg, Gay Lumsden, Dennis Gouran, Dorothy Lenk Krueger, Mark L. Knapp, William B. Lashbrook, Dale Leathers, James McCroskey, Charles Montgomery, Bobby Patton, W. Barnette Pearce, Larry Rosenfeld, Thomas Steinfatt, Raymond Tucker, and Lawrence Wheeless. Of twenty-four questionnaires mailed, nineteen were returned. The questionnaire was intended to tap perceptions of a group of active ISG researchers. It was not intended to provide a randomized or comprehensive survey of opinions. A copy of the questionnaire and cover letter are attached.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
AT
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25 August 1978

Dear Colleague:

As you may already know, the Research Board is sponsoring a program at the 1978 SCA Convention on the current state of research in Speech Communication. Each of the nine SCA divisions will be represented. I have been asked to report and evaluate the 1977 research in Interpersonal and Small Group Communication (ISG).

In researching the 1977 ISG research I have surveyed all of the regional and national journals and the papers presented on ISG-sponsored programs at the 1977 SCA Convention. I am completing this bibliographical aspect of my report by researching the ISG books published in 1977.

The 1977 ISG research needs to be judged as well as reported, and this is why I am seeking your assistance. In evaluating the 1977 publications I would like to draw upon the opinions of a group of active ISG researchers. Enclosed is a ten-item questionnaire which attempts to tap some of the basic issues of relevance to an assessment of recent ISG research. Less than fifteen minutes should be needed to complete this questionnaire. Would you please take a few minutes to fill out this informal poll of opinion and return it to me by September 20th. In this way I will be able to represent a sample of opinions from members of the ISG division.

Thank you for your assistance. I hope to see you at Minneapolis.

Sincerely,

Julia T. Wood
Assistant Professor of Speech Communication

enclosure: informal questionnaire

## ISG RESEARCH: OPINION QUESTIONNAIRE

While I am particularly interested in your evaluation of ISG research that was published in 1977, general judgments, statements of priorities, et cetera are also welcomed. Please use a few sentences in responding to each question.

1. To what extent are ISG researchers asking "meaningful questions"?

2. Is ISG researched adequately focused by a reasonably shared perspective among researchers on priorities of study?

3. Are ISG researchers attempting to integrate their research interests into underlying frameworks of human speech communication processes and theory?

4. Do ISG researchers have adequate agreement on the conceptual nature of their basic objects of study ("interpersonal communication" and "small group comm.")?

5. Among ISG researchers is there agreement on the conceptual boundaries of the field?

6. Does ISG research, particularly recent research, reflect any methodological biases? For example, do you detect a predominance of laboratory, experimental research or naturalistic, field research? Are you satisfied with the current methodological character of ISG research?

7. What questions do you consider <u>central</u> to interpersonal and small group communication? Are you satisfied with current researchers' interest and progress in finding answers to these questions?

8. What, if anything, is the single most pressing deficiency in ISG research?

9. What, if anything, is the single most noteworthy strength of ISG research?

10. Would a developmental conference in ISG serve any valuable function(s) for researchers and/or instructors in this division of interest?

Please add any comments and raise any issues supplemental to the above ten.